

Post office specializes in Christmas cheer

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This is the time of year that the Postal Service delivers season's greeting cards by the millions, including thousands with holiday-related postmarks.

Nationwide, post offices are inundated with Christmas, Hanukkah and New Year's greeting cards throughout December.

"During the holiday season, our stamped-mail volume is up tremendously," says Ray Jacobs, a spokesman for the U.S. Postal Service.

Overall, mail volume increases during the holidays. From the end of November to Christmas, the postal service expects to process an additional 1.8 billion pieces of mail in all categories — catalogs, stamped and metered mail, and packages — for a total of 2.9 billion.

Stamped mail, which includes greeting cards, jumps 20 percent during the holidays. On an average day in December, for instance, the post office processes 100 million pieces of stamped mail. This holiday rush should culminate Dec. 18, officials say, when the Postal Service expects to set the year's record for stamped-mail volume by processing 190 million pieces.

The peak results from a yearly pattern that postal officials have identified. Many senders wait until the weekend before Christmas to address their holiday cards, then mail them on the way to work the following Monday.

To help them deal with the volume, postal officials urge card senders to:

Mail early in the season.

Mail early in the day to help the post office process the extra volume the same day.

Stack the cards so that all are facing in the same direction and put a rubber band around the bundle, so the pieces can be easily canceled and postmarked.

Postal officials also stress that card senders should resist the

temptation to enclose greenbacks with their greetings.

"Mailing cash is bad business, and we advise against it," says Art Shealy, a spokesman for the U.S. Postal Service.

In all cases, postal authorities remind customers that cards and packages should include addresses of both the sender and receiver. For extra protection, those mailing gifts should put a slip of paper inside the package that lists the

contents plus the name and address of the sender and receiver.

Typewritten or handwritten addresses in indelible ink, including the ZIP code or ZIP and four-digit code, also help postal employees deliver letters and packages to their proper destinations.

Skimping on the details of an address can complicate deliveries, postal officials say. "It only takes a little more effort to add an apartment number or trailer number," Shealy explains.

Postmark: Santa Claus

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Meanwhile, in Santa Claus, Ind., and in a number of other towns whose names reflect seasonal messages, postal officials expect a deluge of mail from holiday purists who want a novelty postmark for their greeting cards.

Card senders from all parts of the United States bundle their holiday mail in large envelopes or boxes, address it to the post office in Santa Claus, population 1,000, and mark the package "Postmark Request."

In Indiana, Postmaster Sandra Collignon says that as many as 300,000 cards are expected to receive the Santa Claus postmark this December, compared to the 5,000 letters the post office usually processes in a month.

Although, off-season, Collignon and a part-time clerk constitute the Santa Claus post office staff, the

additional holiday mail calls for an extra worker.

"It's fun ... and you get tired too," Collignon says.

Collignon, a veteran of 20 Christmas seasons at the post office, says that, at peak times, the station's outside mailbox has overflowed, as area residents stuffed loads of cards down the chute.

Not that card senders ever see it, Collignon says, but the town also has its own statue of Santa Claus.

"We just consider that Santa Claus lives here," she explains.

The Efe, descendants of the ancient Africans known to outsiders as Pygmies, firmly believe that white people eat black people and find children especially appetizing.

Postal worker delivers gospel to others

BY CARLA BRIMHALL
Church News contributor

MENLO PARK, CALIF.

The year was 1967. Postal worker, Claude Jones, now mission leader in the Menlo Park 3rd Ward, had been delivering mail on the same route for nine years.

Though he had never heard much about the Church, he knew which families on his route were LDS, based on the newspapers and magazines they received.

One of those families, Mitchell and Betty Hunt, invited him over for a family home evening.

Though he liked what he saw and

felt, it would be another 15 years before he became a member.

"Looking back, I should have been a Mormon from a young age," he recalled. "At age 12, I decided not to drink or smoke. Why? I don't know. I just felt it was better not to do it. I guess someone was helping me make right decisions early on."

The third of eight children, Jones, who is now manager of the downtown Palo Alto, Calif., post office, grew up in Texas, but was only active in his church for the first 19 years of his life.

Married in the Oakland Temple in 1984, Jones was acquainted with his wife, Vada Lee, now a stake missionary, for 12 years before they actually began dating.

She was a real estate broker, and

they frequently found themselves at the same investment seminars.

"I didn't want to do business with her when we first met," he recalled with a laugh. "I thought she was too nice."

Then one evening they went out for dinner. Jones offered her a drink — just to see how she would respond. She declined. "Then it hit me. 'You're Mormon!' I said."

Shortly thereafter, he began taking the missionary lessons and was baptized on March 27, 1983.

"Joining the Church has allowed me to be more spiritual in my life. The more I pray, the more I understand the gospel."

He said his insight into others has also deepened, giving him new control

over situations that formerly angered him.

"The gospel can heal wounds. Christ was very patient with other people. I try to be more conscious of other people and to be there when they need someone."

Today, Jones and his wife work tirelessly in the ward's missionary and Book of Mormon programs, trying to impart to others what is such an important part of their lives.

Always, the couple seeks to involve ward members in missionary work, urging them to mark copies of the Book of Mormon and give them to friends.

"What we would like from ward members is missionary referrals," he explained. "But our ultimate goal is to get everyone involved in missionary work."

...and. We are anxious to replant our crops and sustain ourselves.

"We realize we can't rely on Western Samoa because they are worse off than we are. We live off the fruits of the land, depending on taro, breadfruit, coconuts and bananas to supplement our daily diet. We will have to rely on imported food until we can grow our crops again."

About 18 former missionaries were visiting in Samoa when the hurricane hit. The former missionaries are among those who have been involved in helping build a school in the village of Falealupo on the island of Savai'i in Western Samoa, but most of them were still on the island of Upolu when the hurricane hit.

Two of the group, Jim Winegar and Dan Wakefield, visited with the *Church News* upon their return to Utah. "The thing that was most amazing was to see people sitting on the rubble of their homes — yet they were smiling," said Wakefield. "The fabulous Polynesian attitude of survivorship was evident everywhere. We didn't see any tears. People just gathered together what they could and said, 'We'll rebuild.'"

The first organized clean-up effort after the storm in Western Samoa's capital, Apia, was by a group of about 30-40 proselyting elders. "We looked down the

...Samoa island of Savai'i when Hurricane Ofa struck Feb. 1-4. Following is his first-person account.

Little did I realize as we arrived in Falealupo that disaster lay just around the corner.

Falealupo is a beautiful village on the far shore of the island, surrounded by 30,000 acres of protected rain forest. The wind and rain began to intensify. The surf became heavy. We heard a tropical storm was coming, but it was expected to hit about 100 miles from where we were. We retired for the night unconcerned.

Dr. Paul A. Cox, [a BYU professor] and his wife, Barbara, and their two little girls were staying in a *fale*, a palm-thatched hut, 100 yards from the beach. I stayed with Pela and Lilo, an old Samoan couple, in their house 100 yards farther inland.

Our first encounter with the hurricane came when a great wave washed through the *fale* and Dr. Cox and his family scrambled inland to the house where I was trying to sleep.

The storm raged for days. Great waves pounded the beach, making the earth vibrate. The wind howled unceasingly.

...all. They sang lots of songs, some I recognized as Mormon hymns.

After a wave flooded the house with six inches of water, Dr. Cox put his children on a bed by the front window to keep them dry. Moments later, another wave crashed through the front window and washed them all off the bed.

We left almost everything and made a dash for higher ground, wading chest-deep through the surging water to a house inland and on much higher elevation.

A wave washed through that house, instantly flooding it, forcing us to flee again. Dr. Cox carried his 6-year-old daughter, Hillary, and I carried 8-year-old Mary on my back. Three Samoans carried 84-year-old Lilo.

Our goal was to reach the school one quarter of a mile through twisted rain forest. Fallen trees lay everywhere. At first, I thought this was really exciting. But this was not glamorous. The thrill of adventure had long since evaporated. The wind was so strong it would knock us off our feet.

All that I carried were my camera and Mary. The intensity of the situation pumped me full of adrenalin. I was shaking by the time we reached the school,

The storm's intensity increased. The moaning of the earth beneath the mammoth waves was absolutely spooky. The wind never let up, screaming as it ripped the roof off the school. A giant wave reached the school, flooding the room where we were in.

Dr. Cox prepared everyone for a quick evacuation, should another wave reach us. The only option we had was to go as far inland as we could get and sit out the storm among the fallen trees in the forest. We waited and watched.

The next morning the storm broke. Destruction was everywhere. Dr. Cox put together a small first aid kit and went out to check on everyone. No one in the village was killed or seriously injured.

Except for the school, everything in the village was destroyed. Later, when we got to Honolulu, I realized how badly I looked: I hadn't shaved in a week. I had lost my clothes in the hurricane so I was wearing a borrowed lava lava, a skin-like wrap that island men wear. I had no shoes. My legs had swollen, oozing from infections.

Now, my ordeal is over, but for the Samoan people, it has only begun.

U.S. postmaster general vows to boost efficiency

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Moments after the U.S. Postal Service proposed its largest rate increase in its history, Postmaster General Anthony Frank pledged cost-efficient management and better service.



Anthony Frank

"We are self-financed... we do not use taxes and we haven't since 1982," Frank said Tuesday. "The amount we file for is basically the amount our costs went up over the last interval. Our costs went up 19 percent and we filed for 19 percent."

The rate increase request by the Postal Service Board of Governors includes all classes of mail and would hike the cost of a first-class stamp from 25 cents to 30 cents.

The plan still needs final approval from the independent Postal Rate Commission to become the 15th rate change since the 2-cent stamp became compulsory in 1885 and the first since March 1988, when the price of a first-class stamp jumped from 22 to 25 cents.

The commission has 10 months to reach a decision, and the Postal Service expects the new rates to take effect in February 1991.

"We intend to improve service, (and) cut our costs below the rate of inflation," Frank said.

The Postal Service reported a \$404 million surplus for the first quarter of fiscal 1990, but higher operating costs are pushing it toward an annual loss that is expected to be between \$1.4 billion and \$1.6 billion.

Here are some examples of the changes when the new rates take effect (decreases are boldface):

- Individual cost of mailing a letter: 30 cents, up from 25 cents.
- Cost to mail a post card: 20 cents, up from 15 cents.
- Price of sending a 7-pound package: \$5.06, up from \$4.
- Charge to a bank to send a three-ounce statement: 76 cents, up from 65 cents.
- Department store cost to mail a presorted bill: 26 cents, up from 21 cents.
- Price to send a credit-card bill, sorted according to the full nine-digit ZIP code: 25.3 cents, up from 20.5 cents.
- Utility company cost to send a bill with imprinted bar code: 24.3 cents, up from 20 cents.
- Cost to send 1 pound of legal documents by priority mail: \$2.75, up from \$2.40.
- Charge to send 8 ounces of high-speed business information via Express Mail: \$9.75, up from \$8.75.
- Cost for two-pounds of urgent business materials via Express Mail: \$13.75, up from \$12.
- Postage for a typical newsmagazine: 16 cents, up from 13.5 cents.
- Cost of sending a heavier monthly magazine: 37.4 cents, up from 29.7 cents.
- Postage for 2 ounces of advertising, with imprinted bar code to be read by machinery: 16.1 cents, down from 16.7 cents.
- Rate for half-pound catalog, sorted according to ZIP code: 33.1 cents, up from 27.1 cents.
- Charge for advertising mail, sorted according to the sequence of houses the carrier visits: 9.6 cents, down from 10.1 cents.
- Cost of sending a local 3-pound business package: \$2, up from \$1.58.
- Book club cost to mail a 4-pound package: \$2.26, up from \$1.95.

New post office may be reality in 1994

3-11-90

AMERICAN FORK — The Postal Service hopes to have a new post office in American Fork by early 1994.

According to American Fork Postmaster Kenneth C. Jorgenson, the current lease agreement expires in February 1994, and a new lease for the same building cannot be negotiated.

Originally, the Postal Service had planned to construct a new post office in American Fork in 1988, on a lot already purchased at 72 N. Merchant St., said the postmaster. But in December, 1987, Congress passed legislation cutting the Postal Service's capital expenditures, which severely limited the construction of new postal-owned facilities. The cuts were mandated even though the Postal Service does not receive tax dollars.

About 570 post offices across the nation were affected, said the post-

master. In Utah, construction of 12 other post offices besides American Fork's were put on hold, including ones in Spanish Fork, Salt Lake City, Bountiful and Cedar City.

"However, because the post office will not have a home after early 1994, we're asking our regional office in San Bruno, Calif., for 'pre-emptive points,' on their list of priority projects," said Postmaster Jorgenson. "This means we're asking them to move our post office ahead of others that have more severe structural and space deficiencies than our current building."

The postmaster added that the Postal Service re-evaluates the need for new facilities every year to ensure that areas with the highest need receive first consideration for the limited funds. He expects to hear within one month about the

request to move American Fork up the list.